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CIA Continued Mail Spying for 4 Years After Being Urged to Stop, Three Testify

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WASHINGTON—The Central Intelligence Agency continued an illegal and ineffective mail-opening campaign for four years after the agency's inspector general had urged its termination, former CIA officials testified Tuesday.

Describing their 1969 review of the once-secret 20-year program, the former inspector general, Gordon Stewart, and two associates said they were appalled to find that the program had yielded meager results, was poorly controlled and was run by agents who lacked experience in counterintelligence.

As the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities resumed hearings into CIA practices, Chairman Frank Church (D-Ida.), said that the agency had opened and photographed 215,820 letters of 28 million envelopes it had examined.

Although CIA Director William E. Colby acknowledged existence of the 1953-1973 project earlier this year,

the agency had never provided total figures. The program involved mail between the United States and Communist countries, notably the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the House Intelligence Committee voted 8 to 5 Tuesday to postpone a showdown with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger over his refusal to comply with a committee subpoena.

Rep. Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.), the panel chairman, said the panel would wait until Nov. 3 to ask the full House to enforce a demand for a key memorandum on Cyprus policy. Kissinger, who is currently in China, has been summoned to testify Oct. 30 or 31. Last week, Kissinger refused to give the committee the subpoenaed report of a subordinate's disagreement with U.S. policy on Cyprus, offering instead "a general summary of all dissenting views." Kissinger said he needed to preserve the confidentiality of individual opinion in the State Department.

Pike said he wanted his colleagues

to press ahead without delay on the subpoena question, but was outvoted.

"I thought we should proceed against Dr. Kissinger just as we would against ordinary mortals," he said.

Testifying before the Senate committee on the mail surveillance program, Stewart was asked if then-CIA Director Richard M. Helms had been aware the program was illegal. Stewart said he had personally urged Helms to end it.

"I feel that those who controlled policy understood its status as outside of the law," he said.

But Stewart and his associates, Thomas Abernathy and John Glennon, said they did not specifically brand the program as illegal in their confidential 1969 report. Rather, they said then that the program had little value and could greatly embarrass the CIA if disclosed.

Since much of the data was being passed to the FBI, especially information on possible subversives in the United States, Stewart said he told Helms the FBI should take over the project.

"In your 1969 review, did you find any authorization for opening mail?" Glennon was asked by Sen. John G. Tower (R-Tex.).

"No, sir," Glennon replied.

Tower said that "the fault here goes beyond the Central Intelligence Agency."

"It must be shared by an FBI, which was fascinated by the potential fruits of such efforts, a Postal Service which either willingly or unwillingly allowed it to happen and leaders in the executive branch who simply were not in control," Tower said.

Sitting among spectators in the hearing room, Helms declined to answer newsmen's questions about the

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